DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 351 477 CE 062 230

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TITLE	Project RISE: Workplace Literacy Education in Context.
INSTITUTION	Rutgers, The State Univ., New Brunswick, N.J. Graduate School of Education.
PUB DATE	Oct 92
NOTE	83p.; Prepared by the Program Planning Consultant Group.
AVAILABLE FROM	Graduate Program in Adult and Continuing Education, Rutgers University, Graduate School of Education, 10 Seminary Place, New Brunswick, NJ 08903 ($15).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; Adult Literacy; Cooperative Programs; Employer Employee Relationship; Hospital Personnel; Institutional Cooperation; *Labor Force Development; *Literacy Education; On the Job Training; Productivity; *Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; School Business Relationship; Staff Development
IDENTIFIERS	National Workplace Literacy Program; *Workplace Literacy

ABSTRACT

A reflective self-assessment process was used to evaluate Project RISE, a 1-year, federally funded workplace literacy project. The goal of the evaluation was to help staff understand their collective experience in a way that might help them to serve their clients more effectively in the future. A list of the most critical problems faced by staff was generated. Interviews were then used to collect data from RISE participants and managers at the three client organizations: a Catholic hospital, a research hospital, and a state university. Analysis of data from 70 personal interviews indicated that the workplace literacy education, as conducted by Project RISE, could be described and explained in terms of an overarching theme and five subthemes. The name given to the overarching them was "fit," which pertains to how workplace literacy fits into the workplace context. The five subthemes were as follows: value orientation, motivations/incentives for support, literacy use context, inter- and intraorganizational interactions between RISE and its client organizations, and employer-employee perceptions of RISE participants. The following findings merited consideration for policy and practice: (1) workplace literacy education must be an integral part of an employee development strategy to be optimally effective; (2) all levels must "buy in"; (3) to enhance productivity in the workplace, the nature of work as well as the literacy skills of workers may need to be modified; and (4) to improve worker performance within an organization, programs must conform to the organizational context. (YLB)

ED351477

PROJECT RISE: WORKPLACE LITERACY EDUCATION IN CONTEXT

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October 1992

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INTRODUCTION

In the Fall of 1991, Project RISE, a federally funded workplace literacy project, had been operating for one year. At this point the faculty and staff of Project RISE began to consider how best to assess the effectiveness of their program. It was felt that an assessment was needed so that the project might more effectively serve its clients, service unit employees at: a state university, a research hospital, and a Catholic hospital. In addition, RISE was considering an expansion of the program and wished evaluative data to support the planning effort.

RISE decided to seek assistance in assessing their past performance and in planning for the future. To this end, Project RISE retained the services of Mr. Paul Jurmo, a workplace literacy consultant experienced in the field of workplace literacy program evaluation. To assist in the assessment process, Mr. Jurmo enlisted the services of the Program Planning Consulting Group (PPCG), a group of advanced graduate students in the Adult and Continuing Education program at State University.

As the conceptual groundwork, goals, and context of the assessment project were discussed in early meetings between Pat Leahey, Director of RISE, Hal Beder of PPCG and Paul Jurmo, the project began to take an unusual shape. It was decided that the goal for assessment should be for RISE staff and faculty to engage in a reflective self-assessment process, guided by Mr. Jurmo, and with the PPCG providing assistance and collecting

needed data. The desired outcome was a clearer understanding of the dynamics of the workplace context leading to appropriate changes in the product RISE delivered and perhaps changes in the workplace environment at the University and the hospitals RISE programs served.

Charged with the mission to assist and support a reflective self-assessment process by the RISE team, the PPCG embarked on a project to analyze the needs and contingencies of the workplace in a way that would enable RISE and its partners to work together most effectively. This process began with a crucial overview of the history and context of Project RISE.

Project History

Project RISE was established in the Fall of 1990 as the result of a USDoE workplace literacy grant award of $550,477. Project activities were targeted to support service unit employees at a state university, and two hospitals, all of which are located in a central New Jersey city. The project's objective was the delivery of a multi-faceted workplace literacy training program to meet the needs of both the employees and employers of the three institutions. Program components included reading, writing, English as a second language, computational skills, supervisor's basic skills training, learning to learn, and creative thinking/problem solving activities. Program participants were entry-level workers through front-line supervisors, and all assessment and educational activities took place on-site with employee released time contributed by the

three partner institutions.

The challenge of a workplace literacy program designed to meet the needs of low skilled workers with minimal literacy skills is two-fold; it must address the skill requirements that affect employee productivity in their present functions, and those that limit their opportunities for job advancement as well. A holistic approach focused on present and future needs of employees and employers was necessary to design and implement Project RISE's workplace literacy training program.

The difference between workplace literacy and traditional forms of adult literacy instruction is that workplace literacy is conducted in the workplace context. The phrase "the context of workplace literacy" refers to the environment in which the activities take place as well as the relevance of the activities to the workplace. The logistical complexities of scheduling activities and space in the workplace on a regular basis are difficult when operating in one site and become monumental for a multi-site program. Despite the myriad obstacles and barriers, Project RISE began the phased delivery of its program activities in March 1991 with ESL instruction and ABE instruction in July 1991. Six months of planning, design and development of components and materials preceded the onset of instructional activities, and materials and delivery format were modified and adapted as needed.

The design of the project included: 1) workplace literacy audits, a process by which generic and discrete basic skills were

identified within the context of the work environment and then used to develop assessment tools and curriculum materials for instructional activities, 2) curriculum material development in which work related materials were used to produce functional context competency-based materials that were interesting and relevant to the learner and the workplace, and 3) the delivery and evaluation of educational activities, which encompassed recruitment, assessment and enrollment of employees in program activities, evaluation of the employees' progress during participation, and evaluation of the overall program and its delivery system.

All project activities were offered at the workplace, that is, at locations on the State University campus and at the two hospitals. Activities were scheduled to be accessible to the employees and to accommodate overlapping shifts and peak work periods. Instructional activities were delivered in different formats, including group and individual instruction, that focused on the employees needs. As a complement to the basic academic skill instruction, employees participated in workplace basic skill workshops that focused on why and how adults learn, motivation and goal setting, problem solving and conflict resolution, the workplace culture, communicating in the workplace, and adapting to change in the workplace. As an additional catalyst for learning, each class group was encouraged to identify topics they desired to explore and learn more about and when possible to participate in learner directed projects

individually or as groups.

During the period of the initial federal workplace literacy grant, Project RISE served 434 employees. Through the Spring of 1992, 298 employees participated through a state workplace literacy grant.

A federal grant proposal to continue and expand the project was submitted in the Fall of 1991. Presented was an expansion plan for the Summer of 1992 which included services to four new hospital systems, and potentially 2000 additional employees. In May 1992, the US Department of Education advised Project RISE that the project would not be funded. On June 30, 1992, Project RISE expired.

Notification of project expiration was unanticipated and came as a great blow to project staff and the consultant team. Termination meant that the goals of the reflective assessment had to be modified, because project staff would not have the opportunity to modify future practice in accordance with this report's findings. From specific assessment goals that focused on systematic program expansion, we shifted to the more general goal of helping staff understand their collective experience in a way that might help them to function more effectively professionally wherever they might be working in the future.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

By its nature, reflective self-assessment requires a holistic approach to research that can help staff to understand how context, in this case the workplace, shapes meanings and

behaviors. For this reason, the Program Planning Consulting Group (PPCG) selected a qualitative design for the research reported here. The reflective staff development process which the research was designed to support had four phases: Problem Identification, Data Collection, Critical Reflection, and Recommended Action Plan.

Problem Identification

During the first phase, Problem Identification, both the PPCG and Project Rise staff met in January, 1992 and generated a list of the most critical problems faced by staff involved in the literacy program. The group broke into sub-groups and divided the problems into three categories: A) problems we are confident we can solve; B) problems we might be able to solve, but with difficulty; and C) problems we will probably have to live with. These lists were merged and the problems were then categorized into two major categories: driving and consequence problems. Driving problems were fundamental problems around which consequence problems revolved. Consequence problems were those which were caused by driving problems. The PPCG and RISE agreed to defer consequence problems until the driving problems were investigated.

Once problems had been identified, the next step was to systematically collect information that was necessary if problems were to be thoroughly understood and eventually solved. To collect and analyze this information was the charge of the PPCG. To this end, problems were further classified into two

sub-categories to focus the investigation: (1) problems related to clarity of goals, expectations, and definitions and (2) logistical problems resulting from the workplace context. The merged group split into two task forces, each charged with examining the scope of its respective problem set and generating a data collection plan to address that problem set (goal or logistical).

Data Collection

Once the product of problem identification had provided focus to the investigation, it was decided that data should be collected from two client groups, managers and RISE participants. Separate interview protocols for managers and RISE participants were created by the External Consultant, Paul Jurmo, and PPCG representative, Hal Beder. The questions, which addressed both goal and logistical issues, were reviewed by the PPCG, piloted, and revised.

Individual, open ended, face-to-face interviews were the method of data collection. Each was planned to last, on the average, twenty to thirty minutes. The individual interviews allowed us to probe on details and sensitive issues. Respondents were promised confidentiality.

A total of forty interviews were conducted between February and April, 1992. In two instances, group interviews were conducted with RISE participants who expressed the desire to discuss Project RISE openly in the classroom setting. Each interview was tape recorded and the great majority were

transcribed verbatim.

Sample

The population for the study included the three client organizations that Project RISE serves: Catholic Hospital, Research Hospital, and State University. The sample included RISE participants and managers at all organizational levels who were familiar with RISE.

The Project RISE Director identified those to be interviewed and sent a letter to each institution's management describing the purpose of the study, soliciting their cooperation, and informing them of interviews to be scheduled.

Those interviewed were classified as upper management (eg. vice president), managers (forepersons, directors, coordinators, supervisors) and RISE participants. One middle manager at Catholic Hospital was counted in both groups as he was also a Project RISE, ESL participant. RISE participants at both hospitals worked in the laundry room, housekeeping, and food service departments; participants from State University worked in maintenance, food service and housing. Respondents were as follows:

Interviews Conducted

	Catholic Hospital	Research Hospital	State University
Upper management: VP, Asst. VP, HR Senior Manager.	3	1	4
Managers: Sup., Foreperson, Coor. Middle Manager	5	1	9
Employee/participants	9	4	32*
	17	6	47

Total=70

*Includes three group interviews

Data Analysis

As interviews were completed, transcripts were copied, distributed and reviewed weekly by the PPCG. Emerging themes were noted and the quality and consistency of the data were continuously assessed. To facilitate further analysis, the PPCG was divided into two sub-groups, each targeted to Catholic Hospital or State University. This permitted the identification of commonalities and differences between institutional contexts (few field notes were available at this time from Research Hospital). The two sub-groups were then merged to discuss their preliminary findings and to identify commonalities and differences across the data.

This meeting included participation by representative Project RISE staff who probed for more clarity and details in the data presented. Because the client group attended this meeting, the data were discussed without personal attributions to insure confidentiality of those interviewed. To promote reliability,

the PPCG again reviewed all the data to derive or validate overarching data themes and to begin formulating conclusions based on the available data. From the resulting twelve themes, six overarching categories were identified.

A sub-group volunteered to pilot a further detailed analysis of selected interview data to validate and refine the seven categories which were: (1) value orientation, (2) literacy use context, (3) organizational interactions, (4) incentives and motivations, (5) perceptions about RISE participants, (6) background work role, (7) other. With the refined categories determined, the remaining interviews were parceled among the larger PPCG and coded in small groups according to: 1) field note reference number, 2) interview site, 3) level (upper management, manager, employee/participant), 4) theme code, 5) type of instruction (ESL,ABE). The coding was designed to allow for comparison and analysis across the data based upon any of the codes.

After all field notes had been coded, each coded statement was cut and pasted on an index card headed by the relevant coding. Copies of all cards were supplied to PPCG members. This procedure allowed us to analyze data by theme, by work role, and by institution.

Finally the PPCG was divided into work teams charged with preparing sections of this report. One team was responsible for the introduction, another for the methods and procedures, and a third for the findings section. The team responsible for the

findings section was further divided into groups that refined the analysis of each theme and prepared their portion of the findings section. Each section was organized into Word Perfect files which were then merged and organized into this document.

FINDINGS

Themes

As we reviewed the data from the 70 personal interviews conducted in conjunction with this project, it became clear that the workplace literacy education, as conducted by Project RISE, could be described and explained by an overarching theme and five sub-themes. As we analyzed data, we often used the metaphor of a Tinker Toy sculpture to describe our findings. The metaphor is useful here.

Picture a "sculpture" made from Tinker Toys. In the round pieces that have holes are inserted dowel pieces of varying lengths. The dowels connect with other round pieces to create a three dimensional object. That object as a whole is analogous to the overarching theme. Within our sculpture one can discern five clusters of round pieces which are connected to each other to form the whole. These clusters are analogous to the five sub-themes. A few round pieces have dowel pieces protruding that connect to nothing. These represent loose ends, parts of the picture that are left hanging. Instead of removing them as many researchers might, we have kept them to remind us that our work is just a beginning and that the connections to the loose ends

need to be made through future research.

Fit: The Overarching Theme

The label we have given to the overarching theme is fit. Workplace literacy occurs in a specialized context--the workplace. As in most organizations, in the workplaces we studied each employee had a function--a work role--and those functions were organized and coordinated in such a way as to get the work of the organization done. To fulfill work function, employees needed certain skills and had to possess specific knowledge. Together employees had to function as a coordinated whole, and to achieve this, the workplace was divided into functionally-oriented departments managed by employees designated as managers and supervisors. The organization of the workplace was hierarchial.

Fit pertains to how workplace literacy fits into the workplace context. Is workplace literacy an integral part of a coordinated strategy targeted at organizational effectiveness, or is it a loosely-coupled add on, a frill? How does workplace literacy support and/or conflict with the functioning of the organization? Do workers need to be literate to function in their jobs? If the answer is no, what are the implications? Do managers and supervisors perceive that the benefits they obtain from workplace literacy are greater than the costs they incur? What is in it for students? Do they benefit directly from promotions and increased pay; do they benefit indirectly by increasing their chances outside the workplace; do they benefit

at all?

These are some of the issues that revolve around fit, and they are at the very heart of the function and purpose of workplace literacy. We can not answer all these questions, but as the reader will see in the concluding chapter, we have made some progress.

The five sub-themes are:

Value Orientation

This sub-theme pertains to how clients, managers, supervisors, and RISE participants value workplace literacy. The extent to which clients value workplace literacy, and the way in which they value it, translates into commitment to the program. Valuing is related to managerial incentives for supporting workplace literacy programs and to incentives granted to RISE participants for their participation.

Motivations/incentives for Support

This sub-theme revolves around why, and the conditions under which, management supported Project RISE. Some managers supported RISE genuinely and voluntarily, because they perceived that the benefits to them and RISE participants outweighed the costs. Others supported RISE reluctantly because they were expected to do so by their superiors.

Literacy Use Context

This sub-theme pertains to how, and the extent to which, literacy is needed and used in the jobs of workplace literacy's

clients. On one hand we found that many jobs had been "literacy proofed;" work had been organized to preclude the need to be literate. On the other hand we found that advances in technology were requiring a more literate workforce and that management perceived the need to maintain a pool of employees that could be promoted into jobs that required a high literacy level. The lesson, perhaps, is that if workplace literacy is to be effective, if it is truly to contribute to worker effectiveness, then in many cases work must modified so that literacy is instrumentally valued, used and rewarded.

Inter and Intra-Organizational Interactions between Rise and Its Client Organizations

RISE was a grant-funded project. It was educationally-oriented and external to two of the three client organizations. Each client organization had different organizational structures and different actors. The mission and goals of the two hospitals differed markedly from that of State University.

This sub-theme relates to how organizational context affected interactions between RISE and its clients and how the advent of RISE affected interactions within client departments and units.

Employer-Employee Perceptions of RISE Participants

This sub-theme pertains to how managers and supervisors perceived RISE participants and how participants perceived each other. Both management and participants perceived a dichotomy.

There were "good" students and there were "poor" students. Good students were serious learners, committed to their self-development and benefitting both themselves and the organization. Poor students were those who were not serious learners and who participated only to receive the released time from work.

Sub-Theme One
Value Orientation

Value Orientations

The first sub-theme that emerged from the data focused on the value that respondents placed on participation in workplace literacy and Project RISE. From managers we identified three distinct value orientations: a global, non-specific, value orientation; a work-specific value orientation; and a differential value orientation.

Those who exhibited a global orientation viewed literacy as being a general good, something that had intrinsic value, because it helped low-literate employees to improve their lives, or because it aided the organization in a very general way.

In contrast, managers with a work-specific value orientation valued workplace literacy because they perceived that it would improve performance in a particular job. Literacy was perceived to be instrumental, the direct means to the specific end of a given employee's improved performance.

Managers with a differential value orientation implicitly or explicitly categorized employees who might be eligible for Project RISE into groups. The value they placed on employee's participation in RISE varied according to group.

Three value orientations were also evident among RISE participants: an external value orientation, an internal value orientation, and valuing based on the empowering qualities of the project. Participants with an external value orientation valued literacy for the anticipated benefits they expected to obtain outside the workplace. Those with an internal value orientation valued literacy for anticipated workplace specific benefits such as promotions and increased pay, and those with an empowering orientation valued literacy because as they participated in RISE, they recognized increases in self-efficacy and self-concept.

Relationship to Management Level

We found that the value managers ascribed to RISE was related to their level in the managerial hierarchy and by the outcomes they expected of the project. Upper management tended to be globally-oriented; their valuing of the project was based on the belief that RISE would benefit their organization and its employees in a very general way. For example, an upper management respondent noted: "It [RISE] validates what we say in our mission statement...that we are committed as a community to each other." Similarly, another high level manager recounted, "It delivers a message to employees that says, 'You know all that stuff we talk about?' We're doing it." and still another said, "Realistically if it improved their level of understanding by a grade or two in terms of educational level that would be

wonderful."

Middle level and front-line managers tended to value the project from a more tangible, work-based, performance-oriented perspective. Their valuing was grounded in the need to have employees who could communicate effectively on the job, participate more productively in work teams, and understand and practice better safety methods. Their comments support this bottom-line orientation:

"I think that the ESL program has helped the forepersons in some areas, because they did have some problems with communication. The forepersons just could not understand or could not communicate."

"To increase communication both within the department as well as outside. I have some employees that I cannot send out because they don't speak English . If asked to do something the non-English speaking employee would say 'ok' but not do it because he/she didn't understand."

"So that they could take direction better, communicate better to their peers, patients, customer, and their supervisor."

"The department has actually realized less absenteeism and significantly fewer injuries...since they couldn't read the labels, they would just say instead of using two ounces more is better...and so it would splash on their face...we don't have that anymore..."

Both levels of management within the three organizations valued the project, because they believed that participation enabled their employees to develop increased self-esteem and confidence in their abilities. As the following quotations suggest, managers generally recognized the importance of self-esteem.

"...people went to class, they got out of the environment for an hour and a half twice a week and got to see someone new and their

minds were challenged and I think it has a positive effect... that they felt more comfortable working in the department, that they attained more self esteem because they were able to communicate better..."

"What I know is they (RISE) are trying to help the people, decent people who are trying to help themselves"

"They're feeling more comfortable, more self-esteem...it's been beneficial to them. I believe...It was at a point where they wouldn't say anything until you happened to go around and stumble on this...Why didn't you say anything about this? They're getting a lot better with that."

Additionally managers felt that participation in the project would eventually lead to job advancement for their employees. A supervisor at State University noted that one project participant was working in the office on a temporary basis and that "she is doing a beautiful job...Yes [Project RISE] has helped her...her skills, enthusiasm and we needed an employee...someone I thought who could do the job and be interested in the job and I thought...was."

Although other managers did not cite specific examples, they generally agreed with the sentiment. One manager said, "It is important because we need to develop a ready pool so that we can promote these people to the supervisory level, and they have to have those skills." Another noted, "I was expecting them to speak the language more fluently and understand, and be better with putting down the broom and getting a better job." Still another responded "...we have a gentleman...he understands more than he can speak...he's a group leader. But he can be much more...If he could verbalize more, I think he'd move up. An upper-level manager from a hospital said, "I originally wanted

it for Support Services because I knew there was a problem. When they wanted transfers they couldn't fill out the form...with this program they can write better, spell better and fill out the transfer form right, it's going to help them with that promotion...at least that one barrier will be knocked down."

The Relationship Between Value Orientation and Outcome Expectations

Respondents' expectations of program outcomes were directly related to how they valued participation in the project. Those with global value orientations saw "generic" value in the concept and idea of a workplace literacy program. That literacy was being offered was sufficient to them, and they did not report expectations for specific measurable outcomes. Several quotations which come from upper-level managers demonstrate this:

"I envision the workplace as a part of the 'worklife' where people would have the chance to develop themselves both intellectually, spiritually, and professionally...everyone would go to it because that is what everyone did, because of the pleasure of it, because of the advantages it created for you."

" It's a dream come true for us. I was born and raised here and know the inner city, and how that many kids can't read and write and need the help...Once I saw what it really was I jumped on it. When they had the sign-ups I went to peoples' homes in the rain. I knew people needed it."

" I realized early on that probably the single most important thing that we could do in terms of improving our performance would be to raise our peoples' educational level."

Those with specific value orientations, who as we have noted tend to be front-line-level managers, expected measurable, tangible, performance-oriented outcomes. The criterion they used

in assessing the project was measurable, improved performance on the job. A supervisor at one of the hospitals had concrete expectations, "A better understanding of basic directions ... safety is a problem too...I have a problem telling them what a Code Red is - a fire...it's for their safety and mine and the patient's safety...I use this chemical to disinfect, you know. They go to the 'blue stuff'. I try to get them to [know] it has a certain name, a certain use. And if they don't understand that, they'll be using Trouble Cleaner to clean beds, germicide to clean the window, and nothing is getting properly done."

Managers with "bottom line", work specific value orientations often expected workplace literacy to provide the "quick fix." Expecting immediate, observable outcomes and not understanding that significant gains in literacy require substantial amounts of instructional time, their support for the program declined in some cases. As a State University manager said, "I don't see that it [RISE] has benefitted me. I really don't." A hospital manager stated that there were two employees in particular who she felt "...really needed it [RISE] and I expected them to show some progress by now and I thought it would really help them to advance along, but it seems that they are not willing...Project RISE has been around a year or so, and if they're still in the same place...they're not moving, they're not advancing."

Line-level managers also stressed adequate communication abilities. One said, "I felt it would make my job a little

easier if they knew or we could teach them a little more of the chemicals and learn to say different words that they have a hard time in communicating..." Another noted, "...I didn't see any improvement in self-esteem. I figured that those who could speak English better would come back feeling better about themselves...the employees don't ask questions when they don't understand the directions and they are reluctant to ask questions or have it repeated by the boss. I can't even write them up. They say they are going to do something and don't." Another supervisor combined concrete objectives with a justification for program participation, "I would like to know that the time I'm allocating them away from the worksite is doing something...I'm hoping it has. Maybe it isn't evident to me...the cooks need to be able to double a recipe. That is not always done...simple mathematic skills...they need to communicate it."

Data clearly show that the managers' work roles and expected outcomes impacted on their perceived value of participation in Project RISE. The global value orientations of upper managers--who are further removed from the operating work units--were based on "big picture" benefits to the organization and its employees. Middle and front-line managers' specific value orientations were based on how project participation would positively and immediately impact on the way work is accomplished.

Differential Valuing

Data indicated a high level of frustration among a segment

of middle and front-line managers concerning participation in Project RISE. It was evident that the value they ascribed to participation had evolved and changed during the course of the project. These managers reported that at the outset they expected participation would have a general and positive impact on the work environment by enhancing communication. When they were interviewed, they emphasized specific, visible, measurable work performance as a criteria for assessing participant progress and continued participation.

Consequently, these managers selected employees for participation based on a differential value scale. It appeared that two factors were the criteria for selection for initial participation and continued participation in the project: managers' belief that some of their employees were participating merely to get out of work, and managers' inability to see improved performance on the job as a result of project participation. These managers equated both employees' willingness to participate on their own time (either after work or on days off), and visibly improved job performance, with motivation. Several managers cited that the program should move from work time to their [employees'] own time. A hospital line manager noted, "They should offer something more on their own time if they are really interested. If the person is interested to improve." A manager at the university stated that program activities should be offered in the evenings and weekends, "The incentive needs to be on the employee to want to improve. We can

give them our support, but the employee must be self-motivated to improve at the next level."

Additionally, some managers screen potential candidates for participation based on their value judgment about how it will benefit them on the job. This segment of managers justified this differential valuing in various ways. A middle manager at a hospital said, "I think that the majority of Project RISE get motivation, but they have to have some motivation to volunteer. I think about half of them really get something out of it. I still have a couple that do it to get out of work." Another hospital manager noted, "I expected them to show some progress by now and I thought that it would really help them to advance along, but it seems that they are not willing...Project RISE has been around for a year or so, and if they're still in the same place...they're not moving, they're not advancing." Other hospital administrators noted:

"I can't comfortably drop or recommend a student without knowing what progress they have made." "I could move a person out of a slot and someone else interested into the slot. If I thought no progress or interest was happening - you evaluate - I would rather move someone else into the slot that it is going to help...I try to select employees based on the length of service...long term employees...participants that I would identify ...who would benefit the department. I was looking for people with starter skills."

"...we have had to drop quite a few employees. When I've spoken to the supervisor it's not because of work schedules, they simply don't come."

"If they were really interested, they'd be going right now to the local school. It's free. English classes and so forth."

The data show that all levels managers were generally

supportive of the project. However it is also apparent that managers value the project differently based on their organization, their level within their organization, and finally on the tangible results that are visible on the job. If managers question the value of project participation it is because they can not see the positive results of participation. Without constructive feedback from their employees and project staff, these managers have developed their own standard for valuing participation.

Another aspect of differential valuing has to do with managers' differential perceptions of basic literacy and ESL participants. While there is a stigma attached to low literacy, the stigma does not apply to the inability to speak English. Managers at the university told us that RISE was completely voluntary for employees, because if the university identified low literate employees and induced participation, it would be officially recognizing the literacy deficit. Official recognition might embarrass the employee and lead to repercussions. While success stories of successful ESL participants were printed in the employee newsletter, they were not for literacy participants. Participation for literacy participants was confidential.

RISE Participants

Employees who participated in RISE from all three organizations have developed their own valuing criteria. Participants' value orientations were labeled external values,

internal values, and empowerment.

External values encompassed expectations and achievements outside of the current workplace. Identified were skills needed for acquisition of a new job, for job advancement and career preparation elsewhere, and for improved communication at home and in the community.

A participant discussed the current need to complete an application to get a new job. "The only thing. I couldn't fill out the application and to show some proficencies. But to get that job today, you have to take a test." Another participant valued the program because it prepared him for the GED. "I took my GED test and that's why I came here - to study reading and writing...I wanted to be a fireman actually, but I found out I could get free classes here so ... there's a lot of things that I would like to study. But the time hasn't come for me to really make up my mind. You know, after I get my GED, I'll really make my mind about it." A participant who has lived in the United States for 11 years stated that she spoke Spanish at home and work, so there had been no need to learn English. But her oldest daughter speaks better English than Spanish, so she is participating to better communicate with her children. In a group interview it was stated, "In America, it is important you speak English." "[English] is the national language ... even in Russia." This group recognized the need to communicate if they went to the hospital or schools with their families.

Those with an internal value orientation expected to

derive benefits within the current workplace. These included skills for promotion, for increased responsibilities, and for improved efficiency through better communication. Many participants expressed the need for improved skills for promotion. One participant said that he wants to become a "foreman or another position because I need the money; another position means money." Another said "But for me to get promoted in this job, I mean ... Right now I just stay a custodian until I get my GED and that's what I really want to think about. I mean, it's not what I really want to do." An ESL participant stated "So we work hard and we learn good so we can get good jobs and good money and paycheck." Still another participant felt qualified for an opening, but said "I just hesitate to take [the promotion] because of my language. Still language is my reason to hesitate." The expectation of and desire for increased responsibility was also expressed. "But my foreman, she will be able to put more responsibility on me. She won't always have to write things out. I could write it out for her. You know, the work orders, the ... some things I do anyway. But I believe that more responsibility can be pinned on me ... I like it." A group of advanced ESL participants said that it was important to them that they no longer needed a translator. In fact, many proudly indicated that they had become translators.

Improved skills to improve job performance was also cited. "Because, see, the people who work at the university, they use the work orders as an excuse to not really do the job. You know

how people are. Like, I might see a plumber and say, 'Hey man, I've got a leaky faucet here.' He won't fix it cause I don't have a work order. So these things I really need to know."

Throughout the participant interviews, there was evidence of a higher level gain for participants other than the work-based knowledge and skills they acquired. There were indications that employees became empowered, because participation in the project enabled them to confront challenges. A hospital participant stated that, "The encouragement to us from the teacher have given me emphasizing to go for what I wanted and to go for whatever education I need... I need to get my GED. I think that is my way to college. That is what I need." A university participant, when asked if she had participated in any previous programs, replied "No, but I was always kind of skeptical of going. But now, I'm OK. If I can go through this one, I'll go through another one." " ... I have more confidence in myself." Another participant, a 61 year old man with a second grade education, stated "And now, if there's something I want to know, like a word I can't pronounce, if I see somebody I think knows, I don't mind. I'm not ashamed to ask him. So, that's what the school did for me. It really changed me. Now, I think as long as I live, I think I'll learn. I'm not going to ever quit learning."

Sub-Theme Two
Motivations and Incentives for Support

The second theme focuses on management's motivations and incentives for supporting participation in the program. The data indicate that manager buy-in and support of the program is of two

types -- voluntary and involuntary. Support tends to be voluntary when managers value workplace literacy and perceive that the benefits to the work unit(s) they manage outweigh the costs that dealing with RISE engenders. Costs, which will be discussed more fully in a subsequent section, include such things as shifting work schedules so that RISE participants can participate and scheduling instructional space. In contrast, when the costs of dealing with RISE were high and the perceived benefits were low, some middle and front-line managers "supported" RISE involuntarily--simply because they were told to do so by their supervisors.

At the voluntary level, some managers supported the program, because they genuinely believed that RISE was improving the quality of the workforce. A hospital manager stated "There is a practical aspect. It just makes sense. There is a labor shortage of people who are skilled and intellectually trained in the language, and we need to get them into programs. Happy employees are more productive." Another manager supported the program because "You can give [participants] more responsibilities. It can also get them some better paying jobs in the medical center or within the department." At the University, a manager stated "The job market is depressed so we are starting to have some success in attracting qualified people. But when the economy turns around, we are going to go right back to attracting illiterates."

Other managers supported the program because the financial

costs were low. As a State University manager stated, "Because I think that State University realizes that investing in the employee is good business for them as well. This is purely my own opinion, but especially if it's federally funded. State University has a bottom line as far as expenses too. So here is a great program that doesn't cost the university a lot financially, economically... It's a no lose situation." Similarly, another manager indicated that "It is not hurting us. It does not cost us anything. Everyone we can, we really try to adjust their work hours to get them in."

Some middle and front line-level managers were "boot strappers," minorities who had increased their occupational status through increased education and hard work. They supported RISE in belief that opportunities should be provided for others to work their way up through the organization. As an Afro-American manager put it, "I'm just a firm believer that if you want to be somebody, you can get ahead." "I see myself [in RISE participants]."

This same manager indicated that, for him, the buy-in had evolved. "When I first heard about it, I was against it. I felt that employees could fend for themselves." Since speaking with participants who valued the program, the manager has come to support the program. "So I thought about it, and I realized that I was wrong."

Managerial support was noted by RISE participants as well as by managers. A State University participant stated, "...when

it's time for me to come, my foreman she always say it's time to go to class. You know, so, whatever I have to do, she just makes sure I stop and go." A hospital participant indicated that the supervisor "... knows I worry about leaving to go to the classes when I'm needed, but she still encourages me to go and she'll cover the floor."

At the involuntary level, manager's buy-in to the program is a product of upper management's inducement. "I didn't expect it was going to do anything." a hospital director stated. "I wasn't excited about it at first because I didn't understand the concept and thought it was another program that we had seen in the past. Once they sat me down and explained it to me, this program is very good." "With his [vice president's] foresight, he really did have vision on it. He knew this program would help the employees. Once I saw what it really was, I jumped on it." At another hospital, a supervisor stated, "Upper management is supportive of the program, but I couldn't tell you what their evaluation of the program is. They've been supportive since the first day...We were told to release the people during work hours, and when I run overtime, and when I include Project RISE as part of my production difficulties, it's OK." A university manager stated, " ... in order for the forepersons to be supportive of it, I have to be supportive of it, so they realize that it must go all the way up."

For one high level manager, buy-in derived from the hospital's mission. "It validates what we say in our mission

statement, that we are not only committed to providing health care and assistance to our patients, but we are committed as a community to each other. And that's very important, you can say that all you want. It's a nice concept, but you have to walk it besides talk it...I think the medical center has an obligation as a ministry to look after the well being of their employees. It's a justice issue." Similarly, at the university another manager said, "So Project RISE is something where the personal development aspect ... is very easily supported and also in terms of job development is very easily supported in terms of what the mission is for training in the division."

Conversely, reluctant, partial management buy-in was also identified. A middle manager at the university observed that, "It is difficult for a supervisor or a manager to justify why my people are away from their real work for three hours when I can not see measurable progress." Another hospital manager said, "[Selecting participants] is a problem for me because I have to take someone off their regular duties while someone else is in class."

Indications of reluctant management buy-in were apparent in some participant interviews. A university participant told us that when she had asked her foreman about the program she was not encouraged to participate. Approval was given, however. At a hospital, a participant stated, "My previous head nurse - she told me there was one RISE program, however, she is not happy to send me to a RISE program...And finally, I found on one of my

evaluations that I was causing a lot of problems with her scheduling."

Aside from released time, tangible incentives for participation were not generally offered by the organizations. Although in most cases participants received "moral support" for participation, we did not find a single case where a RISE participant had received a promotion or increased pay that could be directly attributed to participation in RISE. There were two cases of modest tangible support. A manager in a hospital which had experienced difficulty in enrolling participants said, "... there was a drawing to win Walk Mens for those who enrolled, when they get through they will get an appreciation day, and a possible graduation. Everyone is very excited about this." At the university, recognition was viewed as an incentive by one supervisor who said "We ... the division, have a newspaper, and it was published in there that she was the only one that had went and didn't miss any time. They appreciate seeing that, and I think by others seeing it, I think that this time we may have others that may go without missing."

Generally speaking, managers felt that the opportunity to participate and released time were sufficient incentives. As one manager put it while discussing incentives, "I think that just for them to go to private life - that we're doing it on our time - that in terms of the program that we feel it's important and that we'll release them from work."

Sub-Theme Three
Literacy Use Context

In this section we describe the relationship between literacy and the workplace context in which literacy is presumably needed and used. Although two of our study sites were hospitals and one was a large state university, there were many similarities between the organizations. All three were organizations in which the "core" functions were performed by highly educated and relatively autonomous professionals. All three were typified by a hierarchical division of labor. At the bottom of this hierarchy were support staffs that performed the least skilled functions. In the hospitals the least skilled were cleaners, food service workers and launderers; in the university their counterparts were custodians, food service workers, and grounds keepers. Most employees acquired their jobs through the efforts of friends or relatives who already worked for one of the three organizations.

Employees who performed these functions were supervised by individuals who typically had risen through the ranks. Supervisors were managed by managers who in some cases had risen through the ranks and in others had been hired from the outside. As one might expect, the education level increased at each level of the hierarchy to the extent that managers of departments and divisions were typically college-educated. To oversimplify somewhat, line-level employees did the work, supervisors saw to it that the work was done, and managers established the policies governing work.

Understandably, workplace literacy was targeted on the least literate, based on the assumption that when their literacy skills were improved, the quality of their work would improve. Literacy was defined on two dimensions: work-related reading, writing and computational skills, and the ability to speak and comprehend English in the work environment (ESL).

At the beginning of our investigation we recognized two possible contingencies that provided focus to our analysis. The first was that literacy would not be needed for the jobs workers performed. If this were the case, increased literacy skills per se could not be expected to increase job performance, although gains associated with becoming literate, such as improved worker attitudes and self-confidence, might prove beneficial. In the second contingency, literacy would be needed for adequate job performance, and gains in literacy skills could be expected to improve employee performance directly. Our data suggest that reality falls somewhere in between these two contingencies.

Literacy Need

In general, managers, supervisors, and RISE participants perceived a need for literacy at all levels of the workplace hierarchy. As a middle manager stated, "So we have some people with very limited skills in terms of reading and sometimes communications skills with English as a second language. We're talking very basic, limited educational backgrounds." Another manager stated, "The employees don't ask questions. When they don't understand the questions and they are reluctant to ask

questions or have it repeated by the boss... they say they are going to do something, but don't."

Some managers and supervisors believed that increases in literacy would have important tangential benefits for employees. A hospital manager noted, "I figured that those who could speak English better would come back feeling better about themselves--that if people could relate to those around them and participate in it, that they would feel better about themselves instead of shrinking back and not being able to participate."

Communication

The most commonly perceived need for improved literacy was the need for improved communication. A RISE participant noted, "I sometimes question whether my bosses want me to speak English better or just to understand them. My bosses will gain if we can communicate better." When asked about her expectations for project RISE a hospital manager said, "To increase communications both within the department and outside. I have employees that I can not send out because they don't speak English... If asked to do something, the non-English speaking employee would say "ok" but not do it because he/she didn't understand." Another middle manager noted, "A better understanding of, like, basic directions. You want me to clean this. You want me to come downstairs. You want me to help so-and so. Uh, you know, just basic cleaning directions to pick up and they can use on their job."

Although compliance with supervisors' requests and written

directions were a major component of the need for improved communications, some of our respondents were more concerned with inter-worker and worker-client communication. As a hospital manager noted, "Behavior control, controlling anger. We have people who show up with knives. We have people who are performing voodoo, so it [communication] should be getting along with other people of diverse backgrounds." Improved customer relationships were a frequently desired outcome of improved communication, and this was perceived by employees. As one RISE participant said, "In the hospital you keep the environment clean so that doctors and everyone has a clean place to do their job and so the patients can go home and have a very good memory of the hospital."

Health and safety was a major issue, especially for the hospitals where patients were at risk from breaches in sterile procedure, etc. A hospital middle manager said, "You're not just a housekeeper anymore. You have to know how to read. In dietary they have to read the foods. The wrong food could send a person into shock. It could mean a person's life and that means law suits." Another hospital manager noted, ""Yes, there are so many chemicals today for different stuff. If you get a staph infection that means lawsuits, patient loss, angry people, bad advertisement. It has become more technical with today's diseases like AIDS, TB, and God knows what future things. There are certain things that must be done, and if you can't read, it might mean your life." Similarly, a State University RISE

participant noted, "If employees know how to read there would be less accidents, because if they could read the labels and the signs they won't have to worry about as many accidents." Concern for employees, fear of law suits, and keeping insurance premiums low were some of the things that triggered concerns for health and safety. The need to comply with employee rights regulations was also a driving force. As a State University manager said, "Like a lot of times they have Right-to-Know training; they have asbestos training and these people are sitting there and they don't really know what's going on."

While many of those we interviewed perceived there to be a direct correspondence between communications skills and employee effectiveness, others were more concerned with the potential of workplace literacy education for enhancing employees' attitudes. Managers frequently described the effective employee in terms of attitudinal traits. For example, a hospital middle-manager noted, "Pride in their work and pride in their department is what it comes down to... For good department functioning they are going to have to take initiative to do something about it. They are going to have to go a little beyond what's written in the job." Another middle manager told us, "Right now we are looking for people who will be an example for the hospital. People we can trust and have high self-esteem...I want someone who can be flexible and take pressure. They can't have the attitude that 'I don't give a dam."

Many respondents believed that workplace literacy could

and did have a salutary impact on employee attitudes. Speaking about RISE a manager noted, "There is a practical aspect..happy employees are more productive. The workplace is where people spend a good deal of their time." When a State University supervisor was asked how workplace literacy might benefit her department, she said, "The department would gain a happy employee and one who knows their job. If the employee is happy, there is not as much turnover."

Statements about the need for literacy in the workplaces studied suggest that the perceived need for literacy is nearly universal. Yet at the same time, the nature of the perceptions vary. Some respondents note specific skills employees need to do but can not, things such as reading labels, following directions and modifying recipes. In such cases literacy is perceived as a needed job skill. However, the need for literacy skills is by no means universal. Some of the most basic jobs do not require print literacy, and all three of the workplaces we studied took steps to compensate for the low literacy level of their basic employees by "literacy proofing" the workplace. For example, one manager told us, "We've definitely automated to try and make life easier for our employees. We do have computerized recipes. We do have pre-measured dispensers for different chemical solutions. We've tried to work things into our menus, our recipes, our production sheets, so that the minimal amount of effort is needed by the employees to do simple calculations." Sometimes non-English speaking employees are paired with bi-lingual employees

who translate for them.

The issue here is whether literacy proofing is an effective strategy. To a certain extent it is, and in all likelihood it is less expensive than providing literacy instruction. However, while literacy proofing the workplace can compensate for the routine, it can not compensate for the non-routine. What happens when there is not enough meat for the soup or when a new cleaning chemical is introduced that has not been color coded? Such non-routine events--which are common--require employees to make decisions which require literacy.

Many of those who we interviewed were more interested in the "soft" skills of their employees-- in their punctuality, compliance with supervisory authority, and motivation to work. Many believed that workplace literacy could promote those skills by producing happier, more appreciative employees. Yet there was a contradiction. As we have noted several times in this report, managers and supervisors tended to divide their employees into two groups, the motivated strivers and the unmotivated laggards. There was a great deal of concern in all three workplaces that many workplace literacy participants were only interested in getting out of work and they, as employers, were being taken advantage of. Thus while workplace literacy might support the efforts of the motivated strivers and help them to shine even brighter, the unmotivated laggards were unlikely to benefit and should simply be written off.

Promotions, Incentives and Commitment

In examining the relationship between the workplace context and literacy use and need, what and how the workplace values literacy acquisition is a central issue. If low value is placed on becoming literate, we can expect a weak commitment to workplace literacy. When commitment is weak, workplace literacy will be perceived to be a "nice frill," a program to be supported as long as it costs little. When commitment is high, however, we can expect workplace literacy to be integrated into the organizations' total strategy for employee development and for literacy acquisition to be rewarded with remuneration, promotions, status and the like.

As we have noted, nearly all our respondents said that literacy was important and claimed that it was valued both personally and by their employers. Yet a slightly contradictory picture emerges when we examine the tangible aspects of commitment. One aspect of tangible commitment was released time. All three organizations provided it. In two of the organizations instruction was provided on the employer's time, and in one instruction was conducted half on the employer's time and half on the employees' time. Released time was a critical factor in securing employee participation. Indeed, literacy classes previously conducted by the university on employees' time had withered for lack of participation. Yet while released time was an important tangible commitment, many managers at all levels begrudged released time, because it provided the opportunity for

employees who were not serious about literacy education to get out of work. Indeed, more than one manager felt that classes should be conducted on employees' time. As one said, "Project RISE should offer evening and weekend classes so that employees can pursue their educational goals on their own time. The incentive needs to be on the employee to want to improve. We can give them our support, but the employee must be self-motivated to improve at the next level."

We were unable to identify a single case where an employee had been promoted or paid more as a direct result of participation in RISE, although promotions may occur in the more distant future. There were several reasons for this. First, particularly at the University the promotion process was governed by union regulations that made it difficult (and perhaps impossible) for managers or supervisors to promote successful RISE participants. Seniority was more important than educational success.

Some managers did feel that success in workplace literacy education would make employees more promotable. As one manager noted, "A Spanish-speaking person who has been on the job ten years and is a rather senior person can't bid on the job because they can not speak the language well." The point is, however, that if literacy acquisition did abet promotion, the relationship between literacy and promotion was at best indirect.

The second reason why there is a relatively low correspondence between success in project RISE and promotion is

that, in respect to promotion, literacy is a less important employee attribute than others. When a hospital line manager was asked to explain the criteria he used in promotion, he said, "By their work performance. Their attendance, their cooperation, attitude which is very important. Whenever there is a job opening certain people are taken into consideration...we have employees who think nothing of showing up 1-2 hours late or calling in sick."

Clearly, work habits such as dependability, punctuality and motivation to work are the primary criteria which drive promotion. Although it is too early to know for sure, it may be that RISE will serve as a filter, a device whereby managers will be able to identify those with "stick-to-itness" and a bootstrap mentality.

Increased status might also function as an incentive for successful workplace literacy participants; it is an incentive that costs little. Yet while there are many references in the student data to supervisors who provided moral support, there is little evidence that the organizations were conferring special status on successful workplace literacy participants other than recognizing them at graduation ceremonies or issuing them certificates--recognition which for the most part was organized and conducted by Project RISE. The experience of the University suggests one reason why.

At the University, successful ESL participants were highlighted in the employee newsletter. However, successful

basic skills students were never singled out officially, because it was felt that to do so would acknowledge their low literacy and thereby stigmatize them. As a university manager explained, "Well for me it's very simple. People in the ESL program are not as ashamed that they can not speak English. Someone who can master his or her primary language..I am not sure that they would want to be advertised, Some try to hide. Some are not strong enough in my opinion, and I have no scientific basis for it...It's shame."

The Economy

The context of the workplace is affected by the larger context of the economy. When unemployment is high, as it was when we conducted this investigation, employers can select from a large pool of potential workers and filter out the least literate through the employee selection process. Workplace literacy education becomes less important. However, in periods of high employment, employers must select from a smaller labor pool and may have to hire larger numbers of low literates to fill jobs. The managers we interviewed understood this. As one manager said, "Times are good right now in terms of the job market and the university. The job market is depressed so we are starting to have some success in attracting qualified people. But when the economy turns around, we are going right back to attracting primarily illiterates. We got to have a training program in place to get them to the level we want to get them to. How long these people will stay with us when times start getting better on

the outside, I do not know."

Sub-Theme Four
Organizational Intra- And Inter-Actions

Each of the organizations we studied had its own culture; that is, each has its own operating philosophy vested in the basic assumptions, shared values and shared norms which shaped the institution. An organization's cultural orientation may be identified by analyzing statements about its mission, relationships between different hierarchical levels, social interactions among members, and relationships with the external environment. Both the formal and informal structures of an organization contribute to the creation of an organizational culture.

In respect to workplace literacy, the central issue for this sub-theme is the relationships between the organizational cultures of the employer organizations and Project RISE, the workplace literacy project. These relationships revolve around the theme of integration. To what extent is workplace literacy an integral part of the sponsoring organizations' structure and employee development strategy? Is workplace literacy a central function or a loosely coupled add-on? Evidence of integration can be found in the history of project implementation, line supervisors' level of support; the attitudes of upper-level managers, line supervisors, RISE participants and Project RISE staff; the delivery of services to client groups (i.e. departments, RISE participants), and the nature of communication within the employing organizations and with Project RISE staff.

To contextualize the discussion of integration, we will compare two of the sponsoring organizations, Catholic Hospital and Sate University. These two organizations were chosen because their goals differ substantially, and because the data collected from them is the most complete.

Catholic Hospital is a major medical center located in New Brunswick, New Jersey, about a mile from State University. The hospital is a total care institution that operates 24 hours a day. Clients are sick people who in most cases are totally dependant on the institution for their welfare. Because of spiraling health care costs, the institution is very cost conscious.

This context has several implications for the hospital's organizational culture. First, the institution is very health and safety conscious as the lives of patients are at stake and litigation is a constant threat. Second, management and supervision is a 24 hour proposition compounded by the need to communicate across several work shifts. Third, budget constraints make it necessary to obtain a high productivity level from support staff. Taken together, these factors have produced a very "bottom line" mentality among line managers. RISE created very real costs; it required expenditures of time, it removed employees from the job, it made supervision more complex. Consequently, line managers wanted to see results--hard evidence that the costs were worth incurring.

Although line managers demonstrated a decidedly "bottom

line" orientation at Catholic Hospital, upper management was primarily oriented toward humanistic goals of employee growth and welfare. The goals of upper level managers, who were removed from the line-level, derived from the stated mission of the hospital--a mission that reflected humanistic religious values.

The university is in many ways different. Education is State University's mission, and hence education is valued intrinsically. Although worker error among the support staff creates waste, clients are not generally at risk when staff make mistakes. While work begins early for most support staff, there is little shift work. State University is much larger than the hospital and considerably more decentralized. Although State University managers certainly are concerned with the tangible results of workplace literacy education, they are less concerned than their counterparts at Catholic Hospital. It is also important to note that State University was the grantee for Project RISE, and all RISE staff were State University employees. Thus RISE may have been perceived more as an "internal" project by the university and more as an external project by the hospital.

Catholic Hospital

The Medical Center's Vice President of Community Relations was one of two vice presidents we interviewed during this study. Since this vice president was the liaison for Project RISE, her interpretation of the organization's goal for participating in RISE represents the philosophical position of upper management.

She said,

> There is a very strong need in the population for skill development. Literacy skills, language skills, group skills...I see the population stuck in mundane jobs because they [the workers] are inadequate somehow. They can't speak the language, they are illiterate and that limits their choices. If you want to do a certain kind of job because it suits your needs and your personality, that's fine, but you shouldn't feel stuck in that kind of job because you are without some ability that the rest of the world, or most of the rest of the world, takes for granted. I think that the Medical Center has an obligation as a ministry to look after the well being of their employees... It [Project RISE] validates what we say in our mission statement, that we are not only committed to providing health care and assistance to our patients, but we are committed as a community to each other...

The vice president's perspective towards workplace literacy might be defined as a humanistic, "employee growth" orientation, and it derives in part from the religious affiliation of the hospital. In contrast, most line supervisors were more concerned with "bottom line" employee efficiency--how much work a given employee could do in a specified amount of time. This is understandable as supervisors were charged with insuring that the work was done. Differences in philosophical orientation between levels of the hierarchy were acknowledged. As the vice president quoted above went on to say, "If there is a problem with the program, it is that they [lower level managers] have a bureaucratic need to get to an end, define it and show it, whereas I see education of any kind as a way of opening people up to possibilities and opportunities."

Interviews with line supervisors support the Vice President's assessment. Their efficiency orientations are evident in comments such as, "I would like to know that the time I'm allocating away from the work site is indeed doing something"

and "It's something that the hospital said that they, umm, we feel is important so that it will benefit you in the long run. But in the short run, you have eight hours in the day and if you take four employees off the floor for an hour and a half..." and "We were told to release people during work hours and when I run overtime and I include Project RISE as part of my production difficulties, it's O.K." One supervisor even commented, "Project RISE is a pain in the ass."

Are humanistic, employee-growth and bottom line, employee-efficiency goal orientations incompatible? Not necessarily. Many organizations strive to maximize workers' efficiency while promoting their personal and professional growth as well. Movements to empower employees, efforts in shared decision making, and Total Quality Management are examples. However, in the case of the Medical Center, strategies for employee growth--as espoused by upper management-- and employee efficiency--as espoused by line supervisors-- do not appear to have been integrated.

Lack of integration is evidenced by, and is to some extent a product of, the way workplace literacy was established at the medical center. For workplace literacy to be functionally integrated into the organization, it would have to be fully compatible with the work of the organization in both structure and process. Rather than being imposed on the departments where literacy was a problem, workplace literacy would have to be molded to fit them. Certainly, Project RISE attempted to do

this, as great care was taken to make the curriculum relevant to work needs. However, molding the project to meet work needs seems to have been perceived as the Project's responsibility, not the medical center's.

For example, there is no evidence that the line-level constituencies who had a significant stake in the outcomes of the decision participated meaningfully in the decision to establish RISE. This oversight, whether unintentional or not, did not help to create an environment which would nurture a successful relationship with Project RISE. Although upper management may have conveyed their support for RISE to line supervisors, supervisors' knowledge and expertise did not seem to have been sought in adapting the program to the organization's structure.

The Vice President of Support Services noted that employees did not "buy into" Project RISE, and managers claimed that employees would not attend classes if classes were scheduled on their days off and/or if they did not receive released time compensation. Similarly, line-level managers often questioned whether RISE was actually improving employee efficiency. Part of the reason may have been that RISE was not well integrated into the organizational culture. Part of the reason for this lack of integration may have been that the implementation of RISE was not a product of a total organizational strategy that involved RISE participants, line supervisors and upper management in its development.

Lack of integration was also evident in the relationship

between the Department of Community Relations, which had liaison responsibly for RISE, and Human Resources, which was responsible for staff development. As the Assistant Vice President of Human Resources explained, Human Resources was only marginally involved in establishing policies for RISE. "They weren't that involved, just on the side." She indicated that Project RISE organized the program with the managers under the sponsorship of the Vice President for Community Relations. This assistant vice president believed that after the grant was written by the Vice President of Community Relations, Community Relations should have "stepped out of the day-to-day operations. That is where human resources should have come in handy." She explained that communication breakdowns between the departments involved in Project RISE and the policies of the Medical Center could have been avoided if Human Resources had been involved earlier.

Lack of integration has affected communication with Project RISE. It is evident that at the outset few procedures had been established to facilitate the logistics of program delivery. This necessitated more communication with Project RISE staff than anticipated. One assistant manager noted that three Project RISE staff members had called her to track down absent RISE participants. Since these participants did not report directly to her, the assistant manager felt that "this was very time consuming." A manager recalled that she was surprised that RISE participants were not attending class "two-thirds of the way into the program...After this became apparent that there was an

attendance problem and the managers were angry, then they [Project RISE staff] began calling and letting us know." The Assistant Vice President of Human Resources said, "If Project RISE and the managers were better communicators, they could cut the employees who were not dedicated and leave room for those who were."

The State University

The integration of Project RISE into State University was influenced by several factors. On the negative side, RISE was always considered to be a grant funded project--a temporary system established to solve a problem, a program that would be supported as long as external funding was available. When federal funds for RISE were terminated, the federally funded demonstration program was terminated. On the other hand, and despite the limitations of being a grant-funded project, RISE was more thoroughly integrated into the State University system than at the hospital. The organizational culture at State University was more supportive of workplace literacy. Philosophically, because State University was an educational institution, literacy education was perceived to be a good thing, and this was evidenced in the statements of managers at all levels of the hierarchy. Because RISE was housed in university space, RISE staff were employees, and the project reported administratively to university officials, structural integration into the State University system was a given. This integration afforded RISE access to sources of administrative support and promoted its

legitimacy. It also abetted informal communication. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, workplace literacy was perceived to be part of a university-wide training strategy. At State University, each division had a training coordinator who was responsible for the implementation of Project RISE and the liaison among the program, middle management and line supervision. Coordination was facilitated by the fact that the State University's permanent training staff and the RISE director considered themselves to be colleagues.

Interview data indicates that managers and supervisors were supportive of RISE participants, and in contrast to the hospital, there were but a few instances where managers complained about RISE participants who they thought had enrolled in Project RISE to get out of work. Even then, when they did complain, it was common to hear remarks like "My only problems come in - and we've been lucky that way, we really haven't found it that much - with the employee who uses it [Project RISE] to get out of work...even if that's their purpose, they're learning." Comments such as "...Project RISE, by making those people see that they've got the opportunity for the education, that makes them feel better within themselves, and [we] will probably end up with better workers" were elicited from middle managers and line supervisors alike with few exceptions. Additionally, not one RISE participant interviewed indicated that he/she was deterred by their supervisor from attending class, although there were examples of different degrees of supervisor

encouragement. Part of the reason for this support was that many managers and line supervisors had come up through the ranks by increasing their educations. One manager was a high school drop out who had earned a GED. Another, a Brazilian immigrant, had learned to speak English in ESL classes. These backgrounds produced a bootstrap mentality. As one manager put it, "About Project RISE, if you want to get ahead you can. I dropped out of school at 10th grade. [But because many people encouraged me]... I earned my GED. I am just a firm believer that if you want to be somebody, you can get ahead. I see myself in them [RISE participants]."

Although enrollment in Project RISE was voluntary, participation was open to any employee, and the evidence suggests that all employees who wished to attend were accommodated. Supervisors also encouraged particular employees to participate. In some areas, a majority of employees were Project RISE participants, yet work coverage was not an overwhelming problem since participants either adjusted their time on tasks each day or they worked in teams. Although there were supervisors who remarked that covering work assignments was sometimes difficult, it seemed that this problem was not overwhelming and they were confident a solution was possible.

Sub-Theme Five
Perceptions of RISE Participants

The willingness of employers and employees to participate in, support, or otherwise invest in workplace literacy programs is influenced by the perceptions they hold of other members.

When managers perceive that workers lack certain necessary skills or knowledge, but that they are ambitious and dedicated, it is more likely that they will support training programs than if they consider employees to be lazy or irresponsible. Likewise, employees who believe that supervisors value their development and fully support their participation may be more likely to invest th personal effort and time in participating than employees who believe such support is lacking. The flip side of this is that perceptions are colored by one's values and expectations regarding workplace literacy.

As we analyzed the data collected from the three worksites, various categories emerged regarding employer/employee perceptions. The first perceptions that workplace members expressed about others are evidenced by statements, primarily of managers and supervisors, about the workplace in general and workers' abilities, attitudes and aptitudes. These are grouped into perceptions about ambition and promotability, opinions about motivations for participation in classes, judgments about the skill levels of employees in entry-level jobs, and comments about how lack of communication ability in English is used in a manipulative manner on the job. In all cases, we found a group of front-line and middle managers and supervisors who found it natural and/or necessary to differentiate between "good" and "bad" workers.

Lower and middle level managers from all three sites expressed frustration with workers who, they say, lack ambition,

motivation and interest, either in their work or in self-improvement. Some claim that certain employees do not wish to advance, to be promoted. "A lot of them don't want the responsibility. You try to coach them into it but some will and some won't. Some are just comfortable," said one. Workers are happy to say "I'm a custodian and I'm going to retire from here", said another. Even workers with higher education are sometimes "perfectly happy at this level", claims another.

Some workers are characterized as being unmotivated. Workers who are described as being "employees who think nothing of showing up one to two hours late, or calling in sick," and who have "the concept of 'if I do less, or as much as I can get away with," are sources of irritation and frustration for management. Few, however, apply their criticisms to the entire workforce, as one middle manager did: "I personally feel that the workforce doesn't have the loyalty [and] desire, and is apathetic and lazy."

The perception that many employees lack motivation, interest, and dedication led managers and supervisors to two different perspectives about Project RISE participants. On the one hand, there was the concern that management should not have to force employees to participate in a literacy program. "Sometimes the forepersons have to encourage or even push the employees who need it." At a hospital, employees occasionally were urged to attend classes but refused.

Similarly, some employers expressed bitterness that

employees who participated in workplace literacy classes, but did not benefit due to lack of interest or to laziness, were abusing the privilege offered them. If they're "just lazy" and "don't show any interest, they're not going to learn anything out of it or advance," said one supervisor. Another complained that employees who were given the opportunity to attend class on their day off, with pay, "didn't come in. It makes a manager think 'Why am I giving people [paid time] to go to a class that they're really not interested in participating in 100%?'" A third manager attributed lack of progress in communications skills to an unwillingness on the part of the participants: "I thought that it would really help them to advance along, but it seems that they are not willing." Directly related to these perceptions was the concern, typically expressed by managers at Catholic Hospital, that other employees with better attitudes could and should replace the uninterested participants, since enrollment, at least in English as a Second Language classes, was limited.

While some employees are typified as being unmotivated and lazy, others are perceived as being dedicated and upwardly mobile. Managers felt these employees used the classes as a means for self-improvement.

> These are the employees that I feel really want to get ahead.... [They are] not professional pot washers; they really want to get ahead.... I think [they] will do well in all walks of life.
>
> They are decent people who are trying to help themselves.

> They are looking for means to improve themselves.
>
> A majority of them - I'd say about 75% - really want to learn.
>
> I guess they want to better themselves if they can.
>
> Most of the people are going to be the rising stars. These are the people that are going to better their situation.

These managers seem to see the literacy classes as a privilege or bonus which needs to be earned. Their concerns about having to encourage participation and seeing progress derive from their need to justify the bestowal of that privilege.

A recurrent theme at all levels of management, both at the hospitals and at State University, is the fear that workers might be taking advantage of them by attending Project RISE classes only to get out of work. Although in most cases managers recognized that only some of the RISE participants did so, managers's suspicions that they were being taken advantage of prompted them to express intense criticism. At Catholic Hospital, RISE had offered some classes after working hours, but not one employee had volunteered to attend. Two supervisors questioned the motivation of employees who would attend classes only if they got paid for doing so. Others validated their beliefs that workers used classes to avoid work by citing examples of someone "leaving big messes for the person who took over her responsibilities" while she went to class, or attributing the lack of progress of participants to the fact that they were motivated only by the chance to miss work time, or by claiming that participants had no need for the classes they

volunteered to attend. Other managers had a more general concern that some participants, "a few of them, ...I'm sure, feel that 'it's on work time, and oh, I want to get out of work'", and expressed the need to limit participation to those who would actively seek to benefit from the opportunity. Again, line managers, who must deal with the time and convenience costs of participation in RISE, felt the need to justify it on the basis of worthiness and outcome.

None of the RISE participants interviewed attributed their motivation for volunteering to the fact that classes were held during work hours, although one said she liked "working in class on job time," and others expressed their appreciation to the university for making attendance during work hours possible. One participant at Research Hospital said she would attend class on her day off if doing so would avoid scheduling problems with the head nurse.

Although no participants reported of themselves that the opportunity to get out of work motivated their participation, the data suggests that, like their managers, they differentiate between workers who volunteered to attend classes out of a genuine desire to gain knowledge and skills, and those who wished only to escape work for a while. A teacher in the RISE ESL program offered comments about the networking and sanctioning she had noticed among participants. She observed an obvious cooperative network which provided a variety of support services for its members, including "repetition, demonstration,

translation" and monitoring of language tasks during the instructional period. While this cooperative atmosphere initially pervaded all her classes, the instructor noticed a gradual exclusion of those RISE participants who exhibited lack of motivation or effort. She reported several incidents and comments made by RISE participants indicating displeasure with class members who did not invest any effort into the class.

> I recognize that other characteristics besides lack of effort or interest may motivate group members to impose informal sanctions against an individual. However, I feel fairly certain that in my classes such sanctioning does occur at least partly for that reason. The highly motivated majority simply cannot or will not tolerate the 'laggards and slaggards', and will take action against them.

In addition to perceptions about workers' ambition and motivation, both in general and regarding participation in workplace literacy classes, the interviews revealed other judgments pertaining to the workforce at the hospitals and university. Comments about the skill levels of employees occurred frequently. Workplace literacy was often mentioned as being particularly needed and useful, because workers lacked communications skills. A training coordinator at State University lamented that workers who attended mandatory training programs "are sitting there and they don't really know what's going on.... they won't know what you're talking about because their dominant language is not English." They "can perform their jobs pretty well; it's just that they can't speak the language that well, or understand what I'm saying sometimes." Another manager, also at the university, said lack of basic skills keeps

some custodial employees out of promotions. "That person, unfortunately, might have all the skills necessary for the technical part of that job, but may not have the writing or reading skills that they would need to do those other functions that unfortunately have to be done.... also they may not feel comfortable applying for [it] because they don't have the skills. So it may be self-eliminating." Inability to communicate in English or to read gauges limits the tasks workers can be trained for in her department at Catholic Hospital, says another supervisor. "Better English skills would get them into more tasks to do so they wouldn't be doing the same boring tasks for eight hours. Each should be able to do the eight tasks in the job description, but instead they can do only two." Finally, a participant in Project RISE classes stated that "most people" he worked with "don't write good" and that this causes problems on the job.

Several managers believed that some employees who lack English language competence use their native languages or exaggerate the limitations of their communicative competence in English in manipulative ways. In their view, some workers understand more than they let on, or claim not to understand when in fact they do. One manager at Catholic Hospital cited instances when employees "come back to me and say they didn't understand me, even though they did." A State University manager claimed "they can speak when they want to speak; they can understand when they want to understand." A foreperson expressed her opinion

that custodians from language backgrounds other than English behaved in ways that were not "compassionate" when they speak to a person, using their native language and "using words they don't have to just because they thought you don't understand it anyway."

An additional group of comments expressing perceptions of management about their employees who participate in Project RISE classes dealt with whether or not progress was noted, generally progress in communications skills. These statements were sometimes glowing reports on impressive progress. One manager mentioned of a particular participant that "there's really an 80% difference" in her ability to use English to request a vacation day or fill out a form. Another identified "a couple that really shined, you know, that really try," and a third thought he could see "a difference in their assertiveness and communication" and added that "some of them have taken off like Superman."

A larger proportion of managers were disappointed by the lack of progress they were able to observe on the job. One middle manager expected classes to provide "a bit of fresh air" and to result in "improved attitudes", but "didn't see that little bit more energy happening." She concluded that "it's very depressing to let people out of work who might not be getting anything out of it." Another expected to observe increased self-esteem in ESL participants, but didn't find it. "I figured that those who could speak English better would come back feeling better about themselves, and I didn't notice any improvement there."

In most cases where lack of progress was noted, managers referred to specific participants, individuals who did not appear to benefit from the classes as much as their co-workers. For example, a training supervisor suggested that one-fourth of the participants in his work group participated in ESL classes to get out of work. "But I don't see a change in them. I don't see them trying to use it. They just revert back to Spanish." A foreperson listed several improvements she had seen, but mentioned two employees who "really need" ESL classes, but "they're not moving, they're not advancing." Once more, lack of progress was attributed to apathy. Another foreperson reported that two of her employees told her "that they're not really learning anything."

Gains in self-esteem is an area where literacy classes or training programs were expected to make a difference in job performance and personal attitudes. Individuals who participate in programs designed to increase skills or knowledge should, many felt, gain confidence and pride in their new abilities and be able to overcome embarrassment and shame about lack of education or competence. This issue was directly addressed by respondents of all types and at all levels. These comments regarding self-esteem, the need for its development in workers, and the role played on the job by embarrassment about perceived deficiencies, frequently reveal the expectations people have of programs like Project RISE.

First, shame or embarrassment about illiteracy or language

skills was seen as a deterrent to participation. A participant suggested that "there's probably more out there still that are ashamed that don't want to [attend classes]." A manager commented that initiating a literacy program can be difficult because "publicizing it will help some people, but it will turn off others- people who are afraid and in the closet, who can't read and write." Several RISE participants, however, said they were proud to be participants.

Second, lack of self-esteem was seen as a deterrent both to successful job performance and to progress in literacy or language classes. Improved self-esteem in workers would help to get the job done better, said one manager, because "the employees don't ask questions when they don't understand the directions, and they are reluctant to ask questions or have it repeated by the boss." Others were concerned about employees who were unable to adjust to changes in schedules or assignments, who feared the unknown, or who were embarrassed about their pronunciation or grammar. One manager attributed the high drop-out rate of RISE participants in her department to shame at not being able to meet the supervisor's expectations.

Project RISE classes have resulted in increased self-esteem, according to some respondents. One supervisor observed an increase in assertiveness and said some participants had "gained tremendous confidence." Another felt that most of the participants she knew had overcome initial feelings of shame and now recognized that the classes were beneficial to them. A RISE

participant discussed the shame and embarrassment issue, repeatedly claiming "I don't mind letting people know...I'm not ashamed...and now, if there's something I want to know, like a word I can't pronounce, if I see somebody I think knows, I don't mind. I'm not ashamed to ask him. So that's what school did for me..." Only one respondent commented that Project RISE had not resulted in the expected improvement in self-confidence. That manager had expected participants to feel "better about themselves" due to improved English skills, but said she hadn't noticed "any improvement there."

As has already been mentioned, few respondents judged all workers or participants without differentiating between individuals. It is not surprising, therefore, to find statements that clearly demonstrated a perceived difference between participants in Project RISE who deserve to participate and others who are less deserving. Project RISE served to separate the motivated from the unmotivated, the dedicated from the apathetic, according to some. One piece of advice was offered, "Cut them loose and let them rise to the top under their own mode of support." That manager seemed to think participation in special programs should not be too readily available, nor always on work time. Another discussed the "sifting" process that occurs, with programs like RISE acting as an agent. "It's like a sifter; the little ones fall through and the big ones come to the top."

Mostly, however, statements of differentiation between

those more or less worthy related directly to whether or not employees should continue in classes. One concern of line management was that workers who attend classes on work time should be able to prove that their participation was beneficial. "Students who sign up and don't show any interest," who are "taking the place of someone who is waiting for that seat" should be screened out. Project RISE, in consultation with managers, should "cut the employees who were not dedicated and leave room for those who were." "You might not have the best worker attending the class." These managers want, on the one hand, to see results, and on the other hand, to provide opportunities to those who will make effective use of them. It is interesting to note that these comments were made in spite of the fact that, except in some levels of ESL, all employees who volunteered to attend classes were accommodated. Thus the concern that only worthy employees should attend classes could not have been completely motivated by a limitation in the number of openings. More likely, the concern is driven by the view that participation is a kind of honor or privilege, and that those who accepted the honor had an obligation to make good use of the opportunity.

Interactions between managers and ESL participants were to some extent influenced by what seems to be cultural bias. Statements include, "I'm a great believer in if you're going to live here, speak English. Housing is running a Spanish class. I don't want to take it [because] I resent it. I mean if you're going to live here, speak the language." Similarly, "Convince

these people they have to use English on the job. We have to pound it into their heads." An Asian RISE participant at Research Hospital stated, "Well, I'm the one who is looking to move up, and I do have the ability. The political [limitation] is so obvious in the hospital that I feel I do not get respect of the white collar people in the hospital." When asked whether this was due to his language limitation, the respondent replied "Yes", and went on to explain that of the employees who wanted to advance he believed 20% were denied advancement because of the language spoken and 80% due to the color of their skin.

What people say about other people in their work environment sometimes explains their attitudes and behavior on the job and their willingness to support or participate in special programs such as Project RISE. The perceptions that managers and employees have expressed about the motivations, ambition, capabilities, self-esteem, and prejudices of their subordinates, co-workers and managers helps us to understand more clearly how Project RISE has fit into the workplace at State University and at the two hospitals, and what some of the problems have been. Better understanding of how people perceive each other aids us in targeting the right people for participation in workplace literacy programs and in planning and promoting programs in ways that address such issues as expectations and accountability.

This discussion of how workers and literacy project participants are perceived by each other and by management raises

broader issues. To what extent are expectations determined by the degree to which workplace literacy is integrated into the client organization? Was Project RISE viewed by the participating organizations as in integral part of strategic employee development effort? The need of front-line management to see results and justify participation in RISE seems to raise questions about how workplace literacy is valued in these organizations. Perhaps Project RISE was seen by line supervisors as a perk, a benefit, rather than part of a coordinated strategy to improve organizational effectiveness.

CONCLUSIONS

The Concept of Fit

As mentioned at the beginning of our findings section, the five sub-themes we have just discussed are connected by an overriding theme, the theme of fit. Fit pertains to the extent to which workplace literacy is, and can be, integrated into the workplace as an organization.

If workplace literacy truly affects worker productivity in salutary ways, and if the work of those who need workplace literacy is valued highly, then it becomes rational for management to incorporate workplace literacy into the work of the organization-- to establish workplace literacy as an integral and permanent function analogous to management training and other formal staff development activities. In contrast, however, if workplace literacy has but a marginal impact on productivity, and if the work of those who fullfil low level jobs is not valued

highly, workplace literacy can be expected to be supported only as long as the costs are highly subsidized.

Fit also has a structural dimension. If workplace literacy, as configured, is compatible with the structure and operating processes of an organization, then the costs of implementing it will be relatively low. In contrast, if the establishment of workplace literacy causes organizational dislocation and disrupts the daily functioning of the sponsoring organization, the costs of maintaining workplace literacy may be prohibitively high.

Before we elaborate, it is useful to note that there are several strategies other than workplace literacy that organizations can apply in dealing with the problems of low literacy. First, organizations can screen-out low literate job applicants through the hiring process. In times of high unemployment this is a viable option, and there is some evidence that the organizations we studied tried to do this, as we found several cases of low-level workers who were highly educated in other countries. Second, employers can literacy-proof the job by color coding cleaning solutions, computerizing recipes and other such things. This strategy is effective, but only in routine situations. Finally, they can simply ignore the problem. If the work of low-level employees is not valued highly, and if employee error does not create substantial problems, this strategy may be rational.

How do our five sub-themes relate to the notion of fit?

For an answer, to a large extent we must look to our finding of differential values, desired outcomes, and contingencies for "buy-in." We found that while the differences in the above factors were to some extent influenced by institutional sponsorship, they were most influenced by level in the workplace hierarchy. Upper level managers, who were most removed from the work context of low-literate employees, tended to exhibit a global value orientation. For most of them, literacy was a good in its own right, which when provided, would elicit good will from employees and increase their appreciation for their employers. Many believed that workplace literacy would enhance productivity, but in a general and rather amorphous way. Those with a global value orientation were more concerned that workplace literacy was available than they were with specific, measurable outcomes. They tended to buy-into the program because literacy education was an intrinsic good that cost little.

In marked contrast, line-level supervisors and managers--those who actually supervised the work of RISE participants--exhibited a work specific, decidedly instrumental value orientation. Line-level supervisors knew the details of their employees' work and were held accountable when work was done poorly. They were on the firing line, so to speak, and wanted to see the direct impact of workplace literacy education. They were concerned with specific measurable outcomes, and in several cases even demanded "report cards." Line-level managers were more aware of the organizational costs of workplace literacy, because

they were the ones who most frequently paid them. In belief that everyone should have a chance, most supported those RISE participants who appeared to be working hard and learning, but they resented those RISE participants who they perceived to be participating only to take advantage of the released time.

Most line-level supervisors were concerned with immediate outcomes, a quick fix. To a certain extent this is understandable, as most staff development and training in employer organizations is short-term in duration and leads to immediate and observable outcomes. Protracted learning, such as advanced higher education, is generally considered to be the employee's responsibility. Yet literacy education, even if it is highly job oriented, is not and can not be a quick fix. By its nature literacy acquisition takes time, especially for the least literate, and short-term evidence of learning gain is frequently difficult to observe by co-workers and supervisors.

Line-level supervisors initially bought into workplace literacy for three reasons. Some were committed to giving their employees a chance to advance, to better themselves; many recognized that doing so might require successful RISE participants to leave the sponsor organization. Others reluctantly bought in because their superiors required them to. The majority, however, initially supported workplace literacy because they hoped that it would improve employees' work, thus making their jobs as supervisors easier. For these supervisors, tangible results were the bottom line.

To discuss the theme of fit in relation to the preceding analysis, it is first necessary to characterize Project RISE, the piece of the puzzle that was presumably to fit into the larger picture of the sponsoring organizations. Project RISE was a grant-funded "project" hosted by State University. RISE developed curriculum that was workplace relevant, hired and paid teachers, conducted instruction, and evaluated learners. The sponsor institutions allocated the space for instruction and released employees from work to attend (half on employers' time, half on participant's time for one organization, fully on employers' time for the other two). To make curriculum workplace relevant, RISE conducted a comprehensive task analysis/ needs assessment in each of the relevant departments of the sponsor organizations.

We would conclude that RISE fit rather well with the global orientations that characterize upper management. RISE dealt with literacy. Literacy had intrinsic value, and the fact that the curriculum was workplace relevant made it all the better. RISE cost little. Most of the costs were borne by the grant and RISE provided the educational functions and expertise that the sponsoring institutions lacked. Global orientations could be satisfied by a loosely coupled arrangement in which services were provided by an external agency that was not fully integrated into the work of the sponsoring organization. The risk was minimal. If the project failed, at least a few people would have been educated and the sponsoring organizations could

claim credit for trying.

When we examine the workplace-specific orientations that characterized line managers, however, fit becomes more problematic. It was difficult and perhaps impossible for RISE to show the immediate and observable gains line managers sought. Many of the jobs that RISE participants held simply did not require literacy, and hence there was little opportunity for them to practice and demonstrate newly learned skills. While line-level managers valued literacy, they valued other employee attributes more, such as commitment to the work ethic and dealing with clients courteously. How could a project that was viewed as a temporary system impact on work in a way that would fit the concerns at the line-level?

The answer, we suspect, would require modifications in work as well as modifications in employee work skills. For example, while incentives for continued higher education and staff development were built into the employee compensation systems of the sponsoring organizations (people with advanced degrees were paid more. Tuition was reimbursed), similar incentives were not provided for RISE employees. While employees who improved their literacy skills were considered to be more promotable, there was no direct relationship between success in workplace education and promotion. In fact, at State University, union regulations prevented a direct link between success in RISE and promotion. The point is that for workplace literacy to fulfill its promise, sponsoring institutions' compensation and

promotion policies may have to treat workplace literacy education in the same way they do continued higher education and long-term staff development.

While modifications of compensation policies would provide more incentives for low literates to participate, ultimately, in many cases, work itself must be re-designed if workplace literacy education is to satisfy the bottom line expectations of managers. While the ability to speak English could be expected to enhance employee performance in virtually all jobs, this was not so for basic literacy defined as the ability to read English and do basic arithmetic. Many of the jobs RISE participants performed simply did not require basic literacy. For these jobs, managers valued literacy not for its present value, but because it produced a pool of workers who would be able to function more effectively if they were promoted to the next level. Improved literacy for the most basic jobs was a holding tank.

It is axiomatic, however, that if literacy gains are to be retained, literacy must be practiced. RISE purposely developed a curriculum that focused on job-related literacy tasks. Thus the job represented the practice context for RISE participants. It follows that if workplace literacy is to be effective, work itself must be organized in a way that basic literacy is used, and basic literacy acquisition is rewarded. In this regard, literacy proofing the job is anathema. Ideally, line supervisors and workplace literacy teachers should collaborate so that what was taught in class could be systematically practiced under the

supervisor's guidance.

LESSONS LEARNED

Although the findings of this report pertain specifically to Project RISE and the three organizations in which it operated, we believe that our work has yielded several lessons which merit consideration for policy and practice in workplace literacy education generally. These lessons are based on the assumption that workplace literacy education has two goals: First, to help workers to achieve their own literacy goals which, as we have shown, do not always pertain directly to enhanced job performance. Second, to improve employee job performance so as to enhance the productivity of the organizations which sponsor workplace literacy education.

If workplace literacy education is to be successful, it is necessary to meet both employees's and employers' goals. This is so, because in the great majority of cases participation in workplace literacy education is voluntary. Although employers sponsor workplace literacy education to address organizational objectives, learners participate to meet their own goals. It follows that if employees' personal goals are not met, employee participation is unlikely and organizational goals can not even be addressed.

Lesson I.

If workplace literacy education is to be optimally effective, it must be an integral part of an employee development strategy addressing both sets of goals outlined above.

By strategic effort we acknowledge the reality that low literacy skills are but one employee attribute that reduces productivity. Other "causes" of low productivity can include poor motivation and failure to understand work requirements. Thus employers' policies directed at compensation, employee mobility, job assignment, clarity of job responsibilities and supervision have as much as, or even more, to do with productivity than literacy acquisition. Provision of workplace literacy education alone is a non-strategic and often inappropriate response to the problem of productivity. However, when workplace literacy education is conceived and implemented as part of a comprehensive employee development plan, the potential for impact is much higher. Based on our findings, we conclude that the following are necessary if a strategic approach to workplace literacy education is to be implemented.

1. Management at all levels must be clear on their goals for and expectations of workplace literacy education. Workplace literacy education can not serve a diversity of masters if it is to be sufficiently focused. Goal clarity requires a communications and decision making system which involves all levels of the organizational hierarchy in planning workplace literacy and monitoring its success.

2. There must be a clear relationship between the literacy skills taught and work performed. Quite simply, if being literate is not necessary for work performance, then literacy education is unlikely to enhance employee performance.

Likewise, if literacy is less valued that other employee attributes, literacy acquisition is unlikely to be supported and rewarded. In the three organizations we studied, for most jobs managers valued positive employee work habits over literacy ability, and this was reflected in hiring and promotion. We found no evidence that promotion was directly linked to successful participation in Project RISE in the organizations studied. While participation in workplace literacy education may conceivably promote positive work habits, such outcomes as increased motivation to work and reduction of tardiness are serendipitous unless structured into the curriculum. Workplace literacy should not be expected to do what it was not intended to do.

3. The provision of workplace literacy education must be integrated into the work of the sponsoring organization. Line-level supervisors must become partners in the literacy acquisition process so that literacy acquisition can reinforced on the job and workplace literacy professionals can attend to supervisors' concerns in such things as scheduling and providing feedback on learner progress. Incentives that go beyond released time from work should be provided to successful workplace literacy participants.

4. Managers at all levels must realize that workplace literacy education is not a quick fix. Many managers are used to forms of staff development and employee training of short duration and immediate impact. They must understand that workplace literacy education is different, that literacy acquisition takes time and that gains are not always observable--especially in the short term.

Lesson II.

If workplace literacy education is to contribute substantially to organizational effectiveness, and if workplace literacy programs are to be institutionalized into the workplace, there must be "buy-in" at all levels.

Our findings suggest that "buy-in" is a rational process. Managers buy-in when, and only when, they perceive that the benefits of workplace literacy education are real and outweigh the costs. Learners buy-in when they believe what they will gain will outweigh the costs of participation. In the absence of genuine buy-in, workplace literacy education will be supported only as long as it costs little, and support will take the form of "lip service" rather than genuine material assistance.

The first step in creating buy-in is to understand how the various actors in the organization--managers at all levels and potential participants--might benefit from workplace literacy education. The second step is to then design the workplace literacy program to maximize benefits and reduce costs. Since benefits and costs vary by workplace context and work role,

gaining understanding must be part of the initial needs analysis process.

Our findings are replete with examples. For example, we have shown that upper-level managers tend to value workplace literacy education globally--for its intrinsic value, and because provision projects a good public image. When dollar costs are low, and they usually are under conditions of public subsidy, initial buy-in at the upper management level is relatively easy to achieve. However, the long term success of workplace literacy education depends on the buy-in of line-level managers and participants. Being directly accountable for the work that actually gets done, line-level managers want to see concrete, material payoff. Line-level managers benefit when as a consequence of increased employee literacy they are able to delegate more responsibility, supervise less closely, reduce wastage, and be confident that the job will be done correctly the first time. Participants benefit when workplace literacy education leads to promotion, more responsibility and off-the-job benefits.

While upper management is often aware of the costs associated with workplace literacy education, it is line-level managers who suffer the consequences directly. For example, line-level managers must "cover" the work of employees who are in class, and must adjust work schedules.

It follows from this analysis that to secure buy-in, the benefits workplace literacy provides for line-level managers must

be concrete, direct and initially immediate. Likewise, costs must be reduced by competent logistical management. It also follows that if participation is to be secured, incentives must be provided to employees. In this, released time from work is probably necessary, but not necessarily sufficient.

Lesson III

If productivity is to be enhanced in the workplace, it may be necessary to modify the nature of work as well as the literacy skills of the workers.

If there is a single theme that reverberates across all the others it is the theme which we initially called laggards and slaggards. To a greater or lesser degree, in all three organizations we studied, managers--particularly line-level managers--dichotomized workers into two groups: those who were motivated and hard working, and those who were poorly motivated and lazy. The motivated were perceived as benefitting from workplace literacy education and of being worthy of the released time from work provided, while the unmotivated were perceived to be languishing in the program and participating simply to get out of work.

This finding raised an important question to which we have no good answer. Was the dichotimization problem one of human material, the consequence of a need to hire persons for low level positions who were ill suited to work in general? If so, workplace literacy and other forms of training might make a difference, but only if the least productive workers participate

genuinely and are supported and rewarded. Or was the problem with the work itself, work that represented toil and few rewards? If the problem of employee motivation is located in the nature of work itself, then workplace literacy education is unlikely to have positive effects. In such cases work must be changed if productivity is to be improved

Lesson IV

If workplace literacy education is to improve worker performance within an organization, programs must conform to the organizational context.

We have saved our most important lesson to the last, for it is truly the "bottom line" in our analysis. If successful workplace literacy programs are defined as those that have been institutionalized within a sponsor organization and meet long-term participant and organizational goals, then programs must be developed which fit the organizational context in which they operate. Context for the organizations we studied included such things as: 1. why literacy was valued and what outcomes were expected, 2. the structural fit between the way work was organized in sponsor organizations and the way the workplace literacy program was structured, 3. communication structures and patterns, and 4. the relationships between literacy need in work and what was taught in workplace literacy education.

To make workplace literacy education relevant to work, many programs conduct work task analyses so that the curriculum can reflect job requirements. This was so for Project RISE.

However, although such analyses may be necessary, they are not sufficient. Also needed is what we have termed contextual analysis. Contextual analysis is a phase in the planning process where the organizational culture of the sponsor organization is assessed and understood as a precondition for designing programs that fit context rather than conflict with it. Based on our findings the following questions should be addressed in contextual analysis:

1. What are the goals and expected outcomes for workplace literacy education at various levels of the organizational hierarchy?
2. How is literacy valued in and needed for the jobs potential participants perform?
3. What incentives are provided for successful workplace literacy education participants, and why?
4. How and to what extent will managers at all levels benefit from workplace literacy education; that is, what is the payoff for managerial buy-in?
5. What are the logistical costs managers must incur in maintaining a workplace literacy program?
6. How are decisions that affect workplace literacy education made and communicated?